POL 33-1 JORDAN RIVER

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ACTION: CIRCULAR 1854

JORDAN WATERS

Working level meetings on Jordan River with Minister Gazit have taken place March 29 and 31 and first. ~~Expect current round here conclude~~ with Gazit-Deputy Assistant Secretary Jernegan meeting fifth. Israelis requested meetings because said they concerned at recent statements they alleged represented slippage our position on Unified Development Plan (UDP). In lengthy presentation in which he drew extensively on prior documents Gazit argued along following lines:

1. US and Israel are in effective agreement on UDP. Differences remaining between us are minor. Agreed-on documents support this.

2. Recent US statements indicate change in US position. US reps have said UDP not "sacrosanct", US does not want to be "shackled" to it, "combined allocations" is enunciated by US as new principle.

3. US must recognize projects by which Lebanon plans deliver water to other Arab riparians are contrary to international law and UDP and argue thus with Lebanese. Special stress made on need to dissuade Lebanese from first step in "unravelling" UDP, be it Wazzani-Banias or Wadi Sreid canal.

CIRCULAR 1854

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4. In effort describe how Israel's interests affected Gazit referred to: Qualitative (salinity) and ~~XXXXXXXXX~~ quantitative damage caused by Arab spite diversion, UDP proscription of out of basin diversion for Arabs, interference Arab diversions would cause Israeli usage between Dan and Lake Tiberias, loss to Israel of return flow because of Arab out of basin diversion, Arabs' violating international law at expense Israel. He argued desirability of isolating Syria by persuading Lebanese against canal linkup. Noted vulnerability Syrian element of plan (Banias springs 900 meters from Israel) and said if there no alternative to military action "let target be Syria alone". Finally he noted "symbolic" nature any installation erected for purpose of out of country diversion. It has symbolic value far beyond actual amount of water it destined to divert.

5. Gazit held French up as example of posture to take with Lebanese. In our response we:

a. Remonstrated about Israeli tendency to use material from documents out of context in which it originally recorded.

b. Noted recent inconsistencies in Israeli Embassy's own attitude on UDP.

c. Reiterated emphatically our support for UDP as Plan, yardstick of most equitable and rational.

d. Pointed out differences that continue exist between Israelis and ourselves on UDP and stressed fact there no full and formal agreement between US and any of riparians or between riparians themselves.

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e. Stressed our wish get away from sterile discussion about alleged changed US policy and onto more productive exchange about how we can best assure UDP is adhered to.

f. Rebutted number of specific points.

g. Summarized French position as we understood it (Paris 5498).

h. Summarized our efforts to dissuade Lebanese from taking more than UDP allocation, requesting info be held very closely in GOI.

Although some of our responses clearly did not please him Gazit said on whole he reassured by our reaffirmation of support for UDP.

Session on first devoted almost entirely to technical problems. We noted that Gazit's January 7 analysis to Jernegan of adverse effect on Tiberias salinity of Arab plan implied constant level Israeli saline waters offtake. We asked if this realistic. Gazit said Israel was continuing efforts capture more salts and would probably succeed. This not germane to problem however. Israel's efforts to improve situation did not diminish magnitude wrong being done it by Arab upper Jordan offtakes. We indicated we thought it quite relevant. Exaggerated Israeli press accounts about probable effects Arab diversion had contributed to arouse Israeli public fears. Important we arrive at reasonable estimate of magnitude possible damage. Gazit indicated technical considerations less important than "symbolic" value works would have if carried out.

We have some reason to hope there no major misunderstanding remaining with Israelis though exchanges on minor points will certainly continue. ~~Israeli~~

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Israeli objective ~~is~~ apparently is to make absolutely sure we are wedded to UDP in event that they find themselves one day in international forum and need our support badly. More immediate objective is to prevent our acquiescing in Arab "unravelling" while holding Israel "on leash".

GP-3.

END

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